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'Travis Vader, where are the bodies of my parents?'

**Bret McCann confronts
killer at sentencing**
metroNEWS

Rogers lot OK'd, but...

DEVELOPMENT

**Katz Group
has to present
council with
'urban village'**



**Jeremy
Simes**
Metro | Edmonton

The Katz Group is getting the 600-stall surface parking lot it asked for beside Rogers Place, but only on the condition that it builds something better after three years.

Councillors voted 7 to 5 (Coun. Mike Nickel was absent) in support of the contentious lot Monday after the Katz Group promised to present councillors with an "urban village" plan for the site by next year.

The decision means another surface lot will be added to downtown's already formidable parking inventory, in contradiction to administration re-

ports suggesting the core didn't need another to accommodate Rogers Place parking for Oilers games and events.

But Central McDougall Community League president Bernice Tallin said she and many others worry the lot will never become housing.

"We want new development," she said. "Structures to build up housing and build up our community, to reduce crime."

The Katz Group originally proposed the lot operate for three years and to receive extensions thereafter as long as it had begun construction on one building that's 23 metres tall.

But council voted to axe such extensions Monday.

After three years, councillors hope the urban village plan will be in the works.

The deal also means the Katz Group will donate \$150,000 to the Central McDougall Community League, which intends to use the money to improve infrastructure, like lighting.

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GAY-STRAIGHT ALLIANCES

Inquiry into Baptist school board complete



Alberta's Education Minister is reviewing an inquiry into a Baptist school board near Edmonton that has refused to comply with a law allowing students to form gay-straight alliances.

David Eggen confirmed Monday that he has received the inquiry report from labour lawyer Dan Scott, whom the government commissioned in September to examine the Independent Baptist Christian Education Society.

The board runs two schools in Parkland County.

"Mr. Scott did a very thorough job and he's introduced quite a wide range of things that might involve both legislation and/or other actions," Eggen said Monday, at the legislature.

"I'm making a review on it and he did a great job and we will take action."

Eggen would not say when the next steps will be announced.

nounced.

He said in September that the inquiry could result in the school board being defunded or having its licence pulled.

The board's chair, Pastor Brian Coldwell, refused to comply with legislation on gay-straight alliances and said the province was violating his religious freedom.

Eggen wrote to the board in September asking for written assurance that it would comply with the law; the board responded with a letter from its lawyer that reaffirmed its anti-GSA position.

The board receives about 70 per cent of its funding from the province.

Scott was given access to all of the society's papers and personnel to examine whether it is providing a safe environment for all students.

"The comments from the independent Baptist school were very unacceptable and alarming to many Albertans, so we've got to make sure we get this right," Eggen said.

JEREMY SIMES/METRO



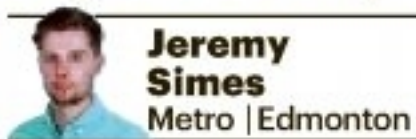
The bylaw change will push our margins down further, and they are already small.

Sherbrooke Liquor Store owner Dave Owens, who says the bylaw will negatively affect mom-and-pop shops.

Liquor store turf war

BYLAWS

Criticism as city approves change allowing higher density



City council passed bylaw changes Monday that could allow more liquor stores to open closer together in suburban shopping centres.

Councillors voted 8 to 5 in support of the bylaw change, which will exempt liquor stores in suburban areas from the current bylaw, which requires liquor stores to be 500 metres from one another.

City administration proposed council vote to exempt current separation distances in suburban shopping complexes as they said the rule has been "problematic."

Edmonton introduced the bylaw to limit the proliferation of booze shops along popular urban streets like Jasper Avenue and Whyte Avenue.

In its report, city administration said the 500-metre-separation rule wouldn't change for mature neighbourhoods.

But city officials said the rule is problematic in suburban areas because shopping centres are built in clusters.

That clustering usually means only one liquor store can open in such complexes.

Many were not in favour of the change.

David Owens, who owns

Sherbrooke Liquor Store, said the bylaw change will only benefit big-box stores.

"They will push our margins down further, and they are already small," he said.

Roberto Noce, representing the Alberta Liquor Store Association, said the decision effectively eliminates the voice of community members.

Noce argued companies looking to open big-box stores or shops could go to the Subdivision and Development Appeal Board for approval.

The hearing would see community members voice their opinions.

Coun. Bev Esslinger told council she couldn't support the change because it could leave community members out of decision-making.

Ryan Koziak, who also owns

a liquor store, said he's seen theft outside his store and across the way outside another shop.

"This is not good for our community," he told council.

However, the city found there is "no significant" relationship between the number of liquor stores and incidents of crime in neighbourhoods.

For example, the liquor store count in Oliver and Athlone tops dozens of communities in Edmonton, but the neighbourhoods have a low crime rate.

On the flip side, Mill Woods Park and Waltherdale in the River Valley have few liquor stores but a higher crime rate.

Council also tasked administration to report back on how the decision would affect suburban shopping districts and communities.

BOW VALLEY

Wolf pack surrounds ski resort employee

The Bow Valley wolf pack is getting bolder, and Parks Canada is warning visitors and residents of Banff National Park to stay alert.

On Dec. 8, an employee of the Mount Norquay ski resort was working in the early hours of the morning and found himself

surrounded by the three remaining members of the pack. The man jumped on his Ski-Doo and fled, prompting the wolves to pursue him for a short time.

There have been more than 17 incidents involving the pack this year, including an adult female wolf being euthanized.

ELIZABETH CAMERON/FOR METRO

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'I'm a throwaway human being' to social services

FOSTER CARE

Mother fights to get her kids back after four years in system



Kevin Maimann
Metro | Edmonton

Jennifer has a Christmas wish list from each of her two daughters, but the system that cares for the girls won't let her give them their gifts.

The Edmonton woman — whose real name Metro is altering to protect the identity of her daughters — has been fighting for four years to gain custody of her kids since they were placed in foster care.

She gets two hours a month to see them, supervised, and has been granted an extra half hour on Christmas.

After years of fighting with the child welfare system, Jennifer said she is sitting in isolation.

"They've now kept these kids in care for four years for no good reason," she said.

Jennifer's daughters were living with their father when social services took them in 2012 after the children accused him of physical assault.

Charges against the father were staid, and he has since passed away from cancer.

Jennifer, who said she was separated from the girls' father and living in a different home at the time, used to see them frequently. She said she has never

received a satisfactory explanation for why she could not be given custody of the girls, who are now nine and 11 years old.

"I just can't say enough about how difficult it's been," she said.

Jennifer said she has three university degrees and currently works in government.

She said her attempts at getting information, such as reports from the foster parents of her girls, have been thwarted at every step.

She had one "shining star" case worker who she said she felt had her best interests at heart, but that worker quit after a year.

Jennifer feels the government has been looking for reasons to keep her away, rather than working toward the best interest of her and the children, ever since the decision was made to place them in care.

She said she has been forced to take drug tests and was told she is a narcissist — a claim she denies.



Parents should clearly know why their kids are in care.

Jennifer

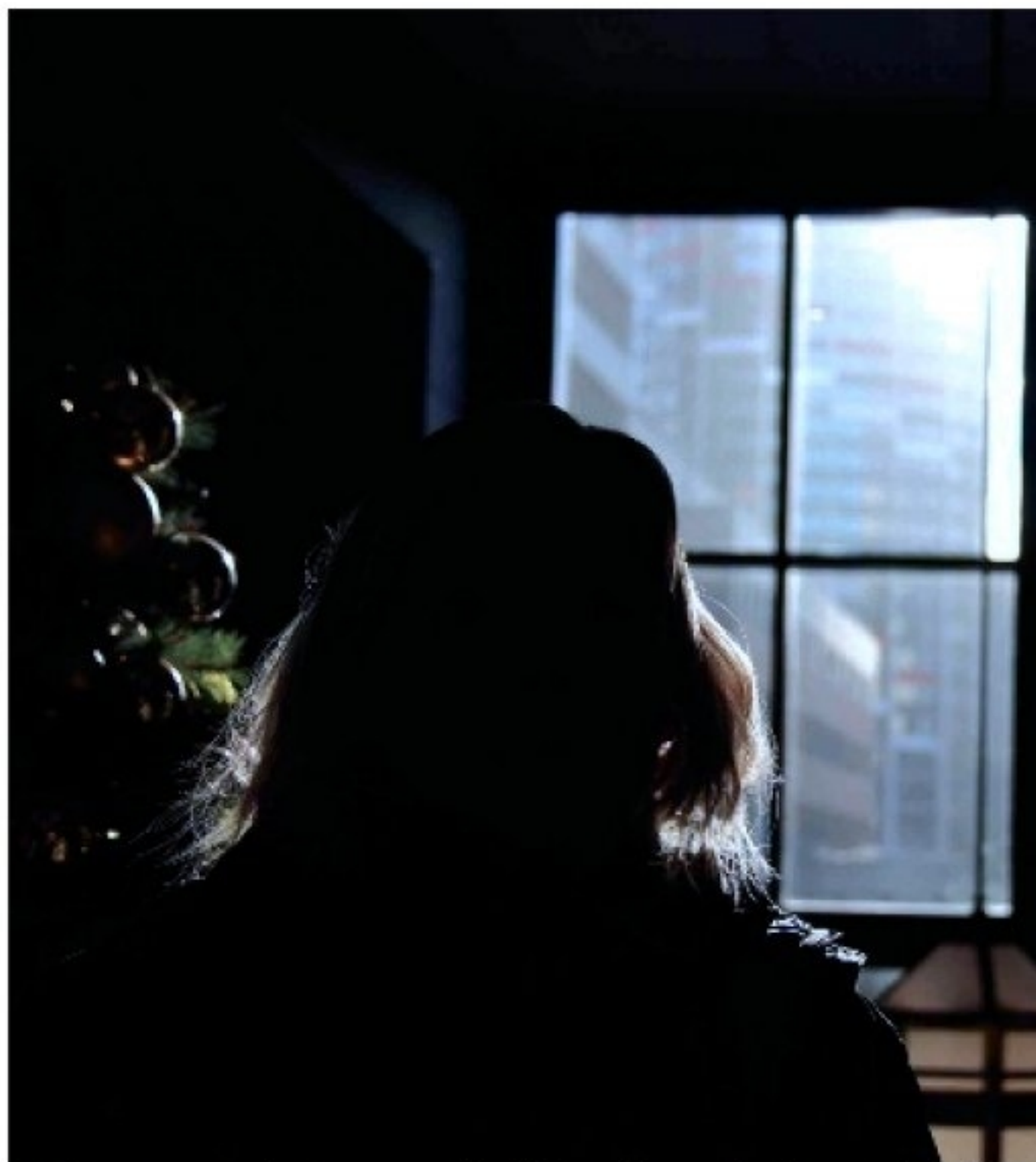
"I'm a throwaway human being to children's services," she said.

"If you actually make people villains, and you create one-dimension-

al characters that they are totally a villain, then you actually stop listening to the facts that are presented to you. And that's what they've done."

Aside from being barred from giving gifts, she said she is not allowed to have her daughters at her home and has been told not to speak of their father or say anything negative about their foster parents.

"They're trying to break attachment," she said.



An Edmonton woman who Metro cannot identify is speaking out about her struggles with Alberta's child welfare system. TIM QUERENGESSER/METRO

Alberta's child intervention system has been the subject of heated debate in the legislature since details emerged last month about four-year-old Serenity, who died in 2014 after being severely

physically abused while in government care.

The Human Services department did not return Metro's calls Monday, but minister Irfan Sabir announced a ministerial panel

last week to examine the child welfare system.

Jennifer said she feels shame, trauma and grief over her experience and is calling for openness and transparency.

HUMAN SERVICES

Notley defends minister

Alberta Premier Rachel Notley has rebuffed calls to fire her human services minister, and instead is accusing the opposition of crass grandstanding in the death of a four-year-old girl.

"(Irfan Sabir) has worked diligently," Notley said Monday during question period.

Notley said the most productive thing for her opponents to do would be to join Sabir's recently announced all-party panel looking to fix systemic problems with children in government care.

"We have invited members opposite to be part of that committee," said Notley. "(But) we are not going to create a platform on which they can score political points like they're trying to do today."

While eschewing opposition gamesmanship, Notley made political accusations herself.

She criticized the opposition Tories for failing to address the problems while in power for almost 44 years, for reducing the number of social workers in the 1990s, and for proposing social service budget cuts in their last budget.

Sabir has been under fire for a week over his handling of the file of four-year-old Serenity.

The girl died two years ago while in kinship care after being brought to hospital with massive brain injuries and evidence of severe physical and sexual assault.

Due to delays, roadblocks and inaction, little has been done to find out why or who is responsible.

The issue became public over three weeks ago after leaked reports to the media revealed even the child and youth advocate was kept in the dark on key aspects of Serenity's case.

Problems compounded when it was revealed the RCMP couldn't open the government electronic file for weeks until Dec. 6 due to technical issues.

As calls mounted for Sabir's resignation last week, he announced the creation of an all-party panel to make recommendations that will be put into legislation to safeguard children.

Wildrose member Todd Loewen turned Notley's verbiage around on her, using the same words she used in the house in 2008 when in opposition she called for the firing of the Progressive Conservative social services minister over problems with sexual abuse of children in government care.

"You clearly have no idea what's going on inside your ministry," said Loewen to Sabir. "You failed your staff. You failed Albertans. You failed these children." THE CANADIAN PRESS

TRAVIS VADER

Bret McCann demands answers at sentencing hearing

Married for 57 years, they were kindred spirits and called each other darling.

Lyle McCann, 78, was known for his patience, a retired long-haul trucker who liked to play cribbage and watch curling on TV. Marie, 77, could whip up a five-course family meal and fill a room with her laughter.

Bret McCann has a recurring nightmare of his parents' death — how one of them was killed first while the other had to watch in horror knowing he or she was next.

But he doesn't know the

details of what happened on July 3, 2010, the day his parents were slain after they left their Edmonton-area home on a camping trip to British Columbia.

Their burned-out motorhome and a vehicle they had been towing were discovered in the days after they vanished.

Their bodies have never been found.

"The one individual who knows where my parents are has said nothing for this whole time," Bret McCann told a sentencing hearing Monday.

"Travis Vader, where are the bodies of my parents?"

Justice Denny Thomas convicted Vader earlier this year of manslaughter. The judge concluded Vader was a desperate drug addict who had come across the seniors in their RV and killed them during a robbery.

Bret McCann recounted how his family put up posters and billboards, raised reward money and organized searches for his parents when there was still hope they were alive.

It's still important that their

bodies are found so they can be properly buried, he said, and he plans to attend every court hearing and parole date in the future to demand an answer.

"Vader has shown no sign of acknowledging that he even caused the death of my parents. He shows no remorse," McCann said. "We will never forget and I will never forgive what Travis Vader has done."

Outside court, he told reporters that he might be able to forgive Vader if he revealed where the bodies are.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

+ ON THE STAND

Vader, who did not testify during his trial, is to take the stand this week, said his lawyer Nathan Whiting.

The defence has said it will ask the court to take into account abuse Vader allegedly suffered while in custody. The defence is asking for a sentence between four and six years.

The Crown wants a life term.

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Rail crew saves cat

RESCUE

Train drivers discover a frozen tabby on top of engine

Jeremy Simes
 Metro | Edmonton

A nearly frozen tabby cat and a "young, strong burly man with a beard," fell in love Sunday after two train drivers found the frozen feline under their engine deck in Wainwright.

Train engineer William Munsey and conductor Brad Slater were working a chilly Sunday morning when they had to drive the Q199 CN train from the small Alberta town to Edmonton.

Temperatures were nearly -40 C with the wind chill.

"It was bitter," Munsey said. The two drivers had to inspect incoming trains in the rail yard and, according to Munsey, Slater left to inspect the train's engines to ensure everything was in order.

But Slater found something



"Q" the cat was saved by two Alberta train drivers on a chill Sunday morning. CONTRIBUTED

out of the ordinary. Using his flashlight, he came across a pair of glowing eyes. It was a grey tabby, frozen solid.

Slater called Munsey over the radio.

"He had this panicked voice," Munsey recalled. "I thought the

inbound crew had ran over something or somebody. But when I walked over he said, "There's a cat."

Munsey said he asked Slater if he should put the cat "out of its misery" — it looked like it was about to die.

But Slater begged they take the tabby onboard, so they did.

Slater wrapped the cat in his shirt and, after an hour of howling meows, the grey tabby curled up in his lap and purred. The feline then gladly ate some beef jerky.

"I don't want to anthropomorphize this, but it was like the cat knew he was going to die and knew which human saved his life," he said. "They fell in love with each other."

Munsey said Slater chose to initially name the cat Q199, which is the name of the train all three of them drove in. He has since simplified the tabby's name to "Q."

Munsey said Q might have to lose his ear due to frost bite, but everything else with the cat seems all right.

Slater intends to keep the cat if his other cats like him, Munsey added. But if they don't like him, Munsey said he will house the tabby with his other barn cats.

"It's a neat thing," Munsey said. "This is a cold, hard, brutal industry and here's this cat, and everyone is smiling over this cat. It's a nice reminder. These tiny acts of kindness are important."

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The new \$3.7-million dome on the University of Alberta's football field will be revolutionary for the school's football team, says the coach. CONTRIBUTED

Bears' new field (house) of dreams

FOOTBALL

Athletes train all year now, so they're better players: Coach

Sarah Hoyles
For Metro | Edmonton

Bears head coach Chris Morris is now training his football players year-round out at Foote Field thanks to a newly installed dome over their home turf.

Since it was built 15 years ago, the University of Alberta's south campus turf field has stood vacant and snow-covered during the winter months, not allowing the players to practise their sport-specific skills.

"To work on the movements

you need to be an effective football player — the steps, the use of your hands, the running ability and the cuts and the breaks — you can't put a value on being able to do that year-round," Morris said.

"Having this basically attached to our locker room allows us to do football-specific training on the field with our players on a daily basis."

The new \$3.7-million dome covers the entire football field, making it the largest air-supported structure in the province.

The total cost of the dome was covered by the U of A along with two \$300,000 donations — one from the Eldon Foote Foundation and the other from the 2001 World Championships in Athletics Legacy Fund.

The province also kicked in \$500,000 through the Community Facility Enhancement Pro-

gram grant.

In addition to the football field, the dome houses a multi-lane, 140-metre running track and jump pit for track-and-field athletes. The space is available for public events, too, including the Canada West Women's Rugby Sevens Series on Jan. 21-22, 2017.

For Morris, the benefits of having the dome will take shape in the coming years.

"It should be a huge competitive advantage for us. We're going to be able to develop players in a way that no one else in the country is."

"If you look at Western Canada, no one else has the ability to have flag and the passing game be worked on all winter long."

"If you look at the long-term benefits of that, it will be good for the kids in our region."

RIDESHARING

Calgary Uber drivers see rates drop



Helen Pike
Metro | Calgary

Calgary's Uber's drivers aren't feeling the love, seeing their fare rates drop in the rideshare giant's relaunch.

Drivers are reporting lower earnings, some by 30 per cent, and rides from downtown to the airport that used to net \$24 only net \$18 now, according to some drivers.

What's more, drivers aren't seeing surge pricing like they used to — a huge incentive in the previous launch.

But Uber Calgary's fares

are still higher than they are in Edmonton, and Uber has given drivers an "hourly fare guarantee."

"From our past experience, when fares are reduced, more riders start using Uber and drivers can make more due to higher demand," said Uber Canada spokesman Jean-Christophe de Le Rue.

Drivers in Calgary are supposed to be earning at least \$20 per hour, as per the guarantee, which fluctuates each day.

Side by side, Uber driver Chris Lix sees a few changes in how Uber has done its fare charges. The base fare went

from \$2.75 to \$1.30; the per minute fare is down eight cents — the list goes on. These things add up, and looking at his earnings last November compared with this past weekend, there's a stark difference.

Drivers seem relatively OK with the lower fare prices, just not with what they see is a lack of surge-pricing incentive.

"Someone told me they were trying to get an Uber for an hour on 17th Avenue on Saturday before I picked them up," Lix said. "So demand is obviously very high. I bet you there would have been a lot more drivers ... if the surges showed the demand."

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Refugee program in spotlight

CONFERENCE

Global experts to look at how settlement effort works



Ryan Tumilty
Metro | Ottawa

Experts from around the world are heading to Ottawa this week to see what Canada gets right on resettling refugees.

The Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative is hosting a three-day conference from Tuesday to Thursday aiming to showcase Canada's private refugee sponsorship program.

That program allows Canadians to sponsor a refugee family coming to Canada.

University of Ottawa professor Jennifer Bond is among the organizers of the event. She said Canada's system is unique in the world and has a lot to offer.

"There have been a few very small-scale pilots in a couple of jurisdictions, but really Canada



Registered Early Childhood Education Educator **Kimberly Vandermeer** leads Syrian refugee children in circle time activities during a playgroup organized by Ottawa Community Health Centres in Ottawa. THE CANADIAN PRESS

is the only country that has a big robust program," she said.

Representatives from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States are coming to



Canada is the only country that has a big robust program.

Jennifer Bond, University of Ottawa

the conference.

Bond said while any poten-

tial program would have to be tailored to the individual coun-

try, there is a lot to share here.

"What is common in many places around the world is compassion that lives in communities. I really think there are caring people all over the world who recognize the tragedy that is happening," she said.

She said with that base a private sponsorship program could be tailored for any one of these countries.

"It's not about taking Canada's model and just plunking it somewhere else, it's very much about taking the expertise that Canada has to offer," she said.

Bond said while some politicians around the world have had negative things to say about refugee resettlement, it's nice to see so many countries interested in the Canadian model.

"In a space that does feel a little bit dark these days this initiative does offer some hope," she said.

The initiative is led by the government of Canada, but also has participation from the University of Ottawa, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and several foundations.

HEALTH CARE

Injection sites made simpler

The federal Liberals are streamlining the process to allow communities to apply to set up supervised injection sites quicker, with less red tape and with less room for community objections.

Health Minister Jane Philpott introduced the bill that would clear out a long list of regulations and conditions for establishing sites that the previous Conservative government introduced.

Those conditions included a requirement to have the approval of a community's council and its police chief. In Ottawa, both Mayor Jim Watson and Ottawa police Chief Charles Bordeleau have indicated they don't support an injection site.

Philpott said the changes are necessary to deal with a public health crisis that is only growing.

"We need to take swift action on the opioid crisis to save lives. We need a renewed focus on harm reduction," she said.

British Columbia and Alberta have seen the most pronounced increase, but communities across the country have seen a dramatic spike in overdose deaths from fentanyl, a synthetic opioid.

RYAN TUMILTY/METRO

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UN calls situation in Aleppo 'very critical'

SYRIA

Ban Ki-moon warns against 'atrocities'

United Nations secretary-general Ban Ki-moon has expressed alarm over "atrocities against a large number of civilians, including women and children, in recent hours in Aleppo."

Syrian rebels retreated from former strongholds in eastern Aleppo in a "terrifying" collapse Monday, holding onto a small sliver of territory packed with fighters and thousands of civilians as government troops pressed on with their rapid advance.

The Syrian military said it had gained control of 99 per cent of the former opposition enclave in eastern Aleppo, signalling an impending end to the rebels' four-year hold over parts of the city as the final



Syrians flee towards safer areas in Aleppo on Monday during government forces' efforts to retake the city. AFP/GETTY IMAGES

hours of battle played out. "The situation is very, very critical," said Ibrahim al-Haj

of the Syrian Civil Defence, volunteer first responders who operate in rebel-held areas. He said he was seeking shelter for himself and his family, fearing clashes or capture by the government.

Retaking Aleppo, which has been divided between rebel- and government-controlled zones since 2012, would be President Bashar Assad's biggest victory in the country's civil war. But it does not end the conflict: Significant parts of Syria are still outside government control and huge swaths of the country are a devastated wasteland.

Ban urged all parties on the ground "to protect civilians and abide by international humanitarian and human rights law."

METRO/WITH FILES FROM THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TURKEY

Hundreds arrested in connection to bombings

Turkish authorities arrested more than 200 people Monday following suicide bombings near an Istanbul stadium that killed 44 people. The arrests primarily targeted members of a Kurdish political party that already was a focus of a

crackdown. Saturday's attack, which a radical Kurdish group claimed as an act of revenge for state violence against the ethnic minority in the southeast, was the deadliest to hit Istanbul this year. Authorities blamed the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GLOBAL DIGEST

TENNESSEE

Terminally ill 5-year-old boy dies in Santa's arms

A Tennessee Santa Claus says a terminally ill 5-year-old boy died in his arms after he gave the child a present in the hospital.

The Knoxville News-Sentinel reports Eric Schmitt-Matzen, who does about 80 events a year as Santa, was asked a few

weeks ago to visit the dying boy.

Schmitt-Matzen says he gave the child a toy. He says the boy gave him a big hug, asked "Santa, can you help me?" and died in his arms.

Schmitt-Matzen says it took him days to recover, but he's continuing to play Santa.

The News-Sentinel report didn't include details on the boy or the hospital. Schmitt-Matzen didn't immediately respond to requests for comment.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

VENEZUELA

Government seizes 4 million toys to give to poor children

Venezuela's socialist government has seized nearly 4 million toys from a private company and says it will hand them out as Christmas gifts to poor children this holiday season.

The country's fair pricing authority seized the toys Friday from three warehouses run by Kreisel, Venezuela's largest toy distributor. Two company executives were detained on suspicion of promoting

price speculation.

Agency director William Contreras alleged that Kreisel under-reported its inventory in order to sell some toys at higher prices. Kreisel has not commented officially beyond responding to Twitter messages of support.

Authorities said local supply committees will be in charge of distributing the toys "fairly" to children.

Venezuela has been wracked by a deep economic crisis accompanied by shortages of goods ranging from food staples to medicine. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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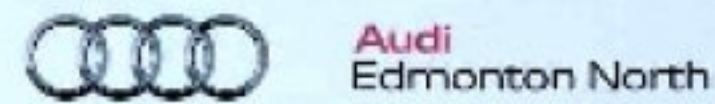
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CHANTAL HÉBERT ON TRUDEAU'S YEAR-END PRESSER



It can't have come as a surprise to the prime minister that while he was asked what he regretted about his first full year in office, he was not queried about what he believes were his successes.

Justin Trudeau would not be human if he had not wished the year-end news conference he gave on Monday on Parliament Hill to provide him — in the spirit of the upcoming holiday season — with an opportunity to celebrate the many missions he believes his government accomplished in 2016.

But he would not be where he is today if he still believed in Santa Claus. And so it can't have come as a surprise to the prime minister that while he was asked what, if anything, he regretted most about his first full year in office, he was not similarly queried about what he believes was his greatest success.

For the record, Trudeau said the execution in the Philippines of two Canadians held hostage for ransom by Islamic extremists had made for his darkest hours as prime minister. A less introvert Stephen Harper would have answered along the same lines. The responsibility to make life-and-death decisions is one that no prime minister takes lightly.

On the plus side, Trudeau might have liked to bask a little longer in the afterglow of the climate pact ratified Friday by 11 of Canada's 13 provincial and territorial governments. After all, when Canada signed the Paris climate accord a year ago,

The Liberals have seemed both blindsided by and blind to the perception that the PM is being elastic in his interpretation of his own ethical rules.

many commentators doubted the capacity of the rookie government to do the heavy lifting required to translate talk into concerted federal-provincial action.

matter before the holidays. The relative radio silence that has attended the aftermath of the first ministers' dinner suggests a compromise designed to allow every-



IN A REFLECTIVE MOOD Prime Minister Justin Trudeau speaks at his year-in-review press conference at the National Press Theatre in Ottawa on Monday. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

But it is the nature of politics that one crisis chases another and so three items of unfinished but time-sensitive business took precedence:

1) More so than climate change, health-care funding has been an apple of discord between Trudeau and the premiers. It was initially Harper who decreed that as of next year the annual increase of the federal health transfer would fall to 3 per cent from 6 per cent. Ever since Trudeau made that Conservative decision his own, the provinces have been crying foul.

The issue was the main topic of the dinner Trudeau hosted for the premiers Friday night. On Monday, the prime minister said he expected a resolution of the

one to save face is in the works.

2) On electoral reform and Trudeau's promise of a new voting system in time for the 2019 election, the Liberals have ended up tangled in a web of their own weaving. Monday, the prime minister professed excitement about the ongoing government's online consultation — the one that almost everyone else has talked about for the wrong reasons. The exercise's main claim to fame is to have inspired parodies in both official languages.

Over the past six months, much of the intellectual energy of the top levels of the government has been focused on the dual issues of pipelines and climate change — at some cost to lesser files. If there is a point to

Trudeau's latest contribution to this comedy of errors, it may be to buy the Liberals time so as to regroup and figure out where to go from the current electoral reform quagmire between now and when the House resumes in late January.

3) Political financing, finally, was never meant to be on the Liberal radar and its appearance has not been good news for the government. It has seemed both blindsided by and blind to the widespread public perception that the prime minister is being elastic in his interpretation of his own ethical rules when he allows his party to trade access to himself and his cabinet for donations.

Based on Trudeau's news conference, that blindness starts at the very top. On Monday, the prime minister said donors did use the access their money bought to lobby him but that it had no impact on his decisions. He compared chatting with donors at exclusive private events to the hosts of closed-door meetings he holds with municipal politicians and/or community organizations.

Trudeau sees a parallel between the discussions he has with representatives of other levels of governments, such as the premiers he spent the day with on Friday and well-heeled contributors to his party's coffers. At this rate, he will soon be reassuring his provincial counterparts that he does not hold it against them that they get to spend quality time with him free of charge. After all, time is money in Liberal land.

Chantal Hébert is a national affairs writer.

When will be walking in a winter wonderland?

URBAN PARADIS

Danielle Paradis



Winter has arrived and the sudden icy blasts have many Edmontonians scurrying inside. These days, our downtown's empty, snowy streets look post-apocalyptic.

Maybe it doesn't have to be this way.

A group of city administrators will bring a proposal on winter design policy to council on Tuesday. It suggests there are ways to thaw the core.

Ian O'Donnell, the new executive director of the Downtown Business Association, says we need to consider the city's climate when planning. "Oftentimes we design just to design, but context is important," he says.

Downtown Edmonton is generally walkable, but both winter and ongoing construction projects make being a pedestrian dreary. Think of the new Fox Towers, which the city allowed to set up rental space in the middle of the road on 104th Street, cutting off access to a sidewalk and requiring pedestrians to zig-zag.

When considering a comprehensive strategy for urban design in a winter city, there needs to be a balance between policies and creative freedom, O'Donnell says. "You don't want to be too prescriptive, and you want to allow some flexibility for individual owners and designers."

That sounds great, but I can't help but think that previous projects, like the Freeze-way, will affect the way that citizens, community groups and developers engage with the new ideas.

At the moment, we are

stuck with the legacy of the past in Edmonton. That means buildings designed without much thought for humans on the streets around them. Consider how so many of our streets have "long blank walls (that) create wind tunnels," O'Donnell says.

The current land use by-laws allow the city to consider the effect of wind created by some tall buildings, but there aren't firm guidelines on what should be accepted.

When wind hits a tall building, it can wash downward and swirl towards the sidewalk, making life as a winter pedestrian worse. Since Edmonton has now removed the height restrictions on buildings, after the closure of City Centre airport, we're going to need a strategy that keeps the ground level in mind.

O'Donnell says there are examples of places that already work. "There's a space by the CBC (at City Centre Mall) that is heated to help shelter people, but isn't necessarily indoors," he says.

Previous initiatives for the winter city planning group have focused on outdoor beauty, but the new policy recommendations are focused on creating warmth, colour and sunlight exposure.

While the proposal seems very practical, there doesn't have to be function over form. With good urban design, O'Donnell says, "you can really create beautiful areas that help make pedestrians feel wanted."

I'd guess that many pedestrians in downtown Edmonton would welcome strategies that consider them. Let's hope city council is enthusiastic about creating guidelines that lure us off our couches during the long winter months.

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Far too many people in television provide a safe space for politicians instead of pushing back and saying 'you didn't answer this question.'
CNN's Jake Tapper is making it his signature to show pit bull-like tendencies when an interview subject avoids a question.

Neuroscience explains why we fall

Elderly are at risk when their brains work especially hard during ordinary tasks, new research finds

Subtle changes in older people's brain activity may increase the risk of falls by as much as 32 per cent, according to a new medical research paper. ISTOCK

Genna Buck
Metro Canada



Vivian Kong knows first-hand how an elderly person's world can shrink after a serious fall.

Her grandfather has been using a cane since he slipped in a parking lot several years back, but it was his latest fall, about two years ago, that really affected his independence.

"He now lives in assisted living — he had his own apartment for years — doesn't use transit anymore, and because doctors don't know why his most recent fall happened, he now owns a scooter and uses a cane," says Kong, 26, of Toronto.

Falls affect one in three Canadians over 65 every year, account for more seniors' hos-

pitalizations than any other injury, and cost about \$2 billion annually, according to the Public Health Agency of Canada.

A new study has shed some light on why so many of those falls, like Kong's grandfather's, go unexplained.

Subtle changes in older people's brain activity — impossible to measure directly without expensive imaging equipment — may increase the risk of falls by as much as 32 per cent, according to a new paper in the journal *Neurology*.

And the changes begin years before doctors and family members can spot any outward signs of trouble.

The 166 seniors (average age 75) in the study had no disabilities, dementia or gait problems. They were hooked up to a machine that monitored

activity of the prefrontal cortex; the decision-making part of the brain.

Then they were asked to do tasks such as walking and reciting every other letter of the alphabet at the same time.

The people whose brains were working especially hard during that particular task, possibly to compensate for mild cognitive decline, were much more likely to suffer a fall over the next four years. The result remained even after researchers controlled for other risk factors.

These findings are important because care providers could be missing some people who are at risk, said Matt Aymar, knowledge translation coordinator at the injury-prevention organization Parachute.

"My initial reaction was



“Because doctors don't know why his most recent fall happened, he now owns a scooter and uses a cane.”

Vivian Kong, 26, whose grandfather now lives in assisted living after a bad fall

wow," Aymar said. "Here is a warning sign, and it's coming a little earlier down the road."

Someone who can pass a typical screening test with ease — get out of a chair, walk three meters, turn around and walk back with a normal gait — might be "using more brain than their friends" to do it, Aymar said.

More research is needed to learn the underlying causes of

falls, so new interventions can be designed, he added. "We could really benefit from more prevention. It will save society a lot of money and give older adults vitality they deserve as much as anybody else."

A fall, especially accompanied by a broken hip, is often the "slippery slope" to a steep decline, Aymar said.

According to Hamilton, Ont. occupational therapist Kayla

McDowell, "Sometimes something as simple as a fall in the bathroom can really devastate someone's world."

"Adult children who work full-time and have families are often relied upon to pick up pieces like meal prep, laundry, and, depending on the severity of the injury from the fall, even things like toileting. This puts a lot of pressure on families and individuals," she said.

Kong's family has been relatively lucky in that regard.

"(My grandfather's) English isn't very good, so there are limited (medical) resources, but he's still pretty independent. He goes out with seniors' groups, and finds Chinese-speaking taxi drivers to take him places. He just moves a lot more slowly and my parents fuss over him a lot more."

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way with seven
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Damien Chazelle's Los Angeles musical La La Land sang and danced its way to a leading seven Golden Globes nominations, with Barry Jenkins' celebrated coming-of-age tale Moonlight close on its heels with six nods.

La La Land earned nominations for its lead actors, Emma Stone and Ryan Gosling, as well best picture, comedy or musical. The film also scored nominations for directing, screenplay, score and original song in the nominations announced Monday in Los Angeles by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association.

Moonlight led the field in the dramatic categories, including best picture. It earned nods for Jenkins' directing and script, supporting actor favourite Mahershala Ali and supporting actress Naomie Harris.

The other nominees for best picture, drama, were Manchester by the Sea, Lion, Hell or High Water and Mel Gibson's Hacksaw Ridge.

The People v. O.J. Simpson continued its awards success with five nominations, including best limited series and nods for stars Sarah Paulson, Courtney B. Vance, Sterling K. Brown and John Travolta. But the TV categories were also populated by more recent acclaimed shows not eligible for September's Emmy Awards, including

**Emma Stone has already won a raft of film awards for her leading role in Los Angeles musical La La Land.** CONTRIBUTED

The Night Of, Westworld, Atlanta, This Is Us and Insecure. HBO led the networks with 14 nominations.

The film nominations also verified that this year's awards season isn't nearly so white as last year's. Along with Moonlight, nominations were heaped on Denzel Washington's August Wilson adaptation Fences (including acting nods for Washington and Viola Davis) and the interracial marriage drama Loving (leads Ruth Negga and Joel Edgerton were each nominated).

Ryan Reynolds joined fellow Canadian Gosling in the actor,

musical or comedy category for his leading role in R-rated Marvel hit Deadpool.

In a sign of Hollywood's increasing dichotomy between mega blockbusters and smaller independent films, the lead nominee getters were overwhelmingly independent. Lionsgate led the way with 10 nods thanks largely to La La Land.

The indie outfit A24, producer of Moonlight, followed with nine. Amazon Studios, which is distributing Manchester by the Sea, outranked goliaths like the Walt Disney Co. (three) and Warner Bros. (just one).

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DEDICATION**Reynolds salutes SickKids**

Canadian actor Ryan Reynolds dedicated his award at the 22nd annual Critics' Choice Awards to the Toronto's SickKids Foundation and Make-a-Wish foundation.

"I gotta start by thanking the entire Deadpool team, without whom I would not be standing up here," said Vancouver-born Reynolds in his thank-you speech for the Entertainment Weekly Entertainer of the Year award.

"Deadpool was an 11-year-odyssey for me to get up here and it resonated with a lot of people. The character had cancer and some of the people that this character resonated with were sick kids. So I would like to dedicate this honour to Make-a-

**Ryan Reynolds dedicated his award in the memory of Grace Bowen, centre, with her sister MacKenzie.** SUBMITTED

Wish foundation and the SickKids Foundation of Toronto, two incredible organizations that do so much for so many kids in need."

Reynolds also dedicated his

award in memory of two children, Connor McGrath and Grace Bowen. "They didn't lose the battle, but they started a fight, and it's up to us to finish it."

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LA LA LAND

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Jost on road less taken

HOCKEY

St. Albert player thriving after choosing NCAA over CHL

It's funny the names that come up in conversation when people start talking about Tyson Jost, who could well be Canada's top left-winger on a line with Dylan Strome at the world junior championship.

One name that pops up: Connor McDavid. Another? Jonathan Toews.

It makes Jost blush to be associated with those two.

"That's humbling," said Jost after a practice at Canada's world junior training camp in Boisbriand, Que. "Those are two world-class players. They're kind of on another level, though."

The St. Albert product doesn't put himself in that company. And to be fair, neither do scouts. But Jost broke McDavid's Canadian scoring record at the under-18 world championship — he had 15 points earlier this year, one more than McDavid in 2013. And he is the first player from the University of North Dakota's hockey program to be invited to Canada's world junior camp since Toews.



Tyson Jost is the first player from the University of North Dakota's hockey program to be invited to Canada's world junior camp since Jonathan Toews. UND ATHLETICS

So it's nice company to keep. "Toews is someone I really look up to," Jost said. "He's someone I really respect, for what he does on the ice, and for what he does off the ice. He's a motivated person, and has that leadership aspect. I really try to model my game after him."

Jost and fellow Canada hopeful Dante Fabbro are taking a path rarely travelled by elite

Canadian teenaged hockey players. They eschewed Canadian major junior hockey for Tier II — they were teammates with the Penticton Vees of the B.C. Junior Hockey League — and now play in the NCAA: Jost at North Dakota, Fabbro with Boston University. Canada rarely takes players from the college ranks, but this year it couldn't resist these two.

Both players were first-round picks in June's NHL draft, Jost going 10th overall to Colorado and Fabbro 17th to Nashville. And both should have big roles at the world junior tournament.

"Jost is an energy bug," said Canada's chief scout, Ryan Jankowski. "He's not afraid to do the heavy lifting, and do the hard work, and get pucks to Strome. There's a little bit of

"I just thought UND would be the best path for my development."
Tyson Jost

chemistry there."

Fabbro is seen as a possible top-pair defenceman. "He moves the puck well, he's got a good stick, he's smart," coach Dominique Ducharme said.

The decision to go to a U.S. college wasn't easy for either. Often, the quickest path to the NHL is through the Canadian Hockey League.

To be sure, good players come from the NCAA, often as late bloomers. It's accepted for elite American players to go there, like Jack Eichel and Noah Hanifin. But it's rare for elite Canadian teenagers to choose that route, although Toews and Kyle Turris are past examples.

There's no right or wrong way, Jankowski said. "The NCAA doesn't play as many games, but they play against bigger, stronger competition. There's a little bit of a trade-off there. Our Canadian junior guys play a lot of games, a lot of volume in the CHL."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

NHL

Nurse out for up to 12 weeks

Edmonton Oilers defenceman Darnell Nurse has undergone surgery to repair ligament and bone damage to his ankle and will be out of action for up to 12 weeks.

Oilers general manager Peter Chiarelli made the announcement today via the team's Twitter account.

Nurse was injured in the Oilers' 6-3 win over the Winnipeg Jets on Dec. 1.

He has three goals and two assists in 25 games for the Oilers this season.

THE CANADIAN PRESS



Darnell Nurse GETTY IMAGES FILE

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Tight-marking Giants expose Dallas' Achilles heel



Dak Prescott, left, was sacked three times and threw two interceptions in Sunday's loss to the Giants. ELSA/GETTY IMAGES

NFL

Cowboys' win streak halted by New York's physicality

Maybe instead of looking at what the Cowboys have been doing to the rest of the league, NFL teams should look at what the Giants did to the Cowboys this season.

And who knows, maybe what New York could do again should they meet in the playoffs. Dallas' offence ripped through nearly every opponent during an 11-game winning streak that began after a 20-19 home loss to New York in the season opener.

That string ended under the powerful pressure the Giants applied on defence Sunday night: a strong pass rush; sticky coverage of the Cowboys' star receivers, Dez Bryant and tight end Jason Witten; and three takeaways. Tampa Bay, Detroit and Philadelphia, the Cowboys' final three opponents, surely will take note.

The Cowboys have put their stamp on victories all year by jumping to leads and pounding opponents with sensational

rookie running back Ezekiel Elliott. Dak Prescott has made all the right decisions and plenty of big plays. The defence has been far less dynamic, but not a liability.

That formula earned them the league's first playoff spot last week and could have gotten them a first-round bye with a victory over the Giants at MetLife Stadium.



We're not going to let this do anything but improve us.

Cowboys owner Jerry Jones

Except the formula got squished by the Giants, 10-7. While there's no reason to panic in Big D, the Cowboys' main public speaker, owner Jerry Jones, hoped the loss would provide a cautionary tale. "As a team, we will react to this loss against a physical Giants team and get better," Jones said. "We're not going to let this do anything but improve us."

Jones smiled when the in-

evitable question came of whether Tony Romo's role will change after Prescott struggled mightily in the Meadowlands. Dallas went an abysmal 1 for 15 on third downs and gained a season-low 260 yards.

"No," he said with emphasis. Although the Cowboys have a big lead in the NFC with three games remaining, Jones knows they are treading a thin line when relying on rookies as major contributors. Of course, Elliott and Prescott appear to be special rookies.

And he was quick to restate his unwavering confidence in the kids. "We're proud of our guys," Jones said. We've seen Dak have a bad series or what I'd call challenging series and come back and right the ship. We have no expectations that he won't come back. I like our players' tools."

As he should. They are, after all, 11-2 and likely to earn the top seed in the conference. They are, at the very least, a leading contender to reach their first Super Bowl since that other JJ (Jimmy Johnson) built a squad that Barry Switzer coached to the 1995 NFL title

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

IN BRIEF

Ronaldo named best soccer player in the world

Cristiano Ronaldo was voted the best player in the world for a fourth time Monday, taking home the Ballon d'Or award in a year in which he led Portugal to its first European Championship title and Real Madrid to another Champions League trophy.

It is Ronaldo's third Ballon d'Or award. He won the FIFA player of the year award in 2008 while still playing for Manchester United. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tannehill diagnosed with sprained ACL and MCL

Ryan Tannehill's left knee injury is less serious than first feared and no surgery is expected, but it remains unlikely he'll play again this season for the Miami Dolphins.

The quarterback's injury was diagnosed as a sprained ACL and MCL, coach Adam Gase said Monday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Supreme Court secures NFL's \$1B concussion pact

The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday rejected challenges to the estimated \$1-billion plan by the NFL to settle thousands of concussion lawsuits filed by former players, clearing the way for payouts to begin to those who have been diagnosed with brain injuries linked to repeated concussions.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DeRozan pours in 30 as Raps rout Milwaukee

DeMar DeRozan had 30 points, and Terrence Ross added 25 as the Toronto Raptors beat the Milwaukee Bucks 122-100 on Monday.

The victory was Toronto's third straight, and ninth in their past 10 games. Kyle Lowry had 18 points and seven assists for the Raptors (17-7), while DeMarre Carroll had 13 points, and Jonas Valanciunas finished with 11 points and a game-high 13 rebounds.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NCAA FOOTBALL

'Bama, Ohio State lead all-Americans

No. 1 Alabama placed four players on The Associated Press All-America team, most of any school, and Louisville quarterback Lamar Jackson and fellow Heisman Trophy finalists Jabrill Peppers of Michigan and Dede Westbrook of Oklahoma were also first-team selections.

The Crimson Tide and No. 2 Ohio State tied for the most players on the three All-America teams released Monday with six. No. 3 Clemson had five players on the three teams, but none on the first team.

Jackson won the Heisman Saturday, finishing well ahead



Lamar Jackson GETTY IMAGES

of Clemson's Deshaun Watson and Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield. The three quarterbacks lined up similarly on the All-America teams with Watson second-team and Mayfield third-team.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

Your daily crossword and Sudoku answers from the play page.

for more fun and games go to metronews.ca/games



8	1	9	4	6	5	7	2	3
5	3	7	2	9	1	4	6	8
6	4	2	8	3	7	1	5	9
9	5	6	1	2	8	3	4	7
1	8	4	7	5	3	2	9	6
7	2	3	6	4	9	8	1	5
2	9	5	3	8	4	6	7	1
4	7	8	5	1	6	9	3	2
3	6	1	9	7	2	5	8	4

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MAKE IT TONIGHT

Harmonious Roasted Chicken and Grapes



PHOTO: MAYA VISNIE

Ceri Marsh & Laura Keogh
For Metro Canada

You might find this combination unexpected but we promise you'll love pairing of sweet grapes with shallots and garlic.

Ready in 35 minutes

Prep time: 10 minutes
Cook time: 25 minutes
Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 4 chicken thighs
- 2 shallots, sliced
- 3 cloves of garlic, minced
- 3 cups red seedless grapes
- 1 cup chicken stock
- 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar
- 1 Tbsp brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp dried thyme

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. In a large, oven-safe skillet, warm up olive oil over medium high heat. Brown — but don't worry about cooking through — the chicken thighs, about 3 minutes each side. Remove the chicken from the skillet and place on a clean plate.
3. Reduce the heat under the skillet to medium and toss in the shallots and garlic. Cook about 3 minutes until they soften. Add grapes, stock, vinegar, sugar and thyme and stir. Allow the sauce to begin to simmer.
4. Nestle the chicken pieces into the sauce and place the skillet in the oven. Bake for 20 minutes. Serve over cous cous, mashed potatoes or polenta.

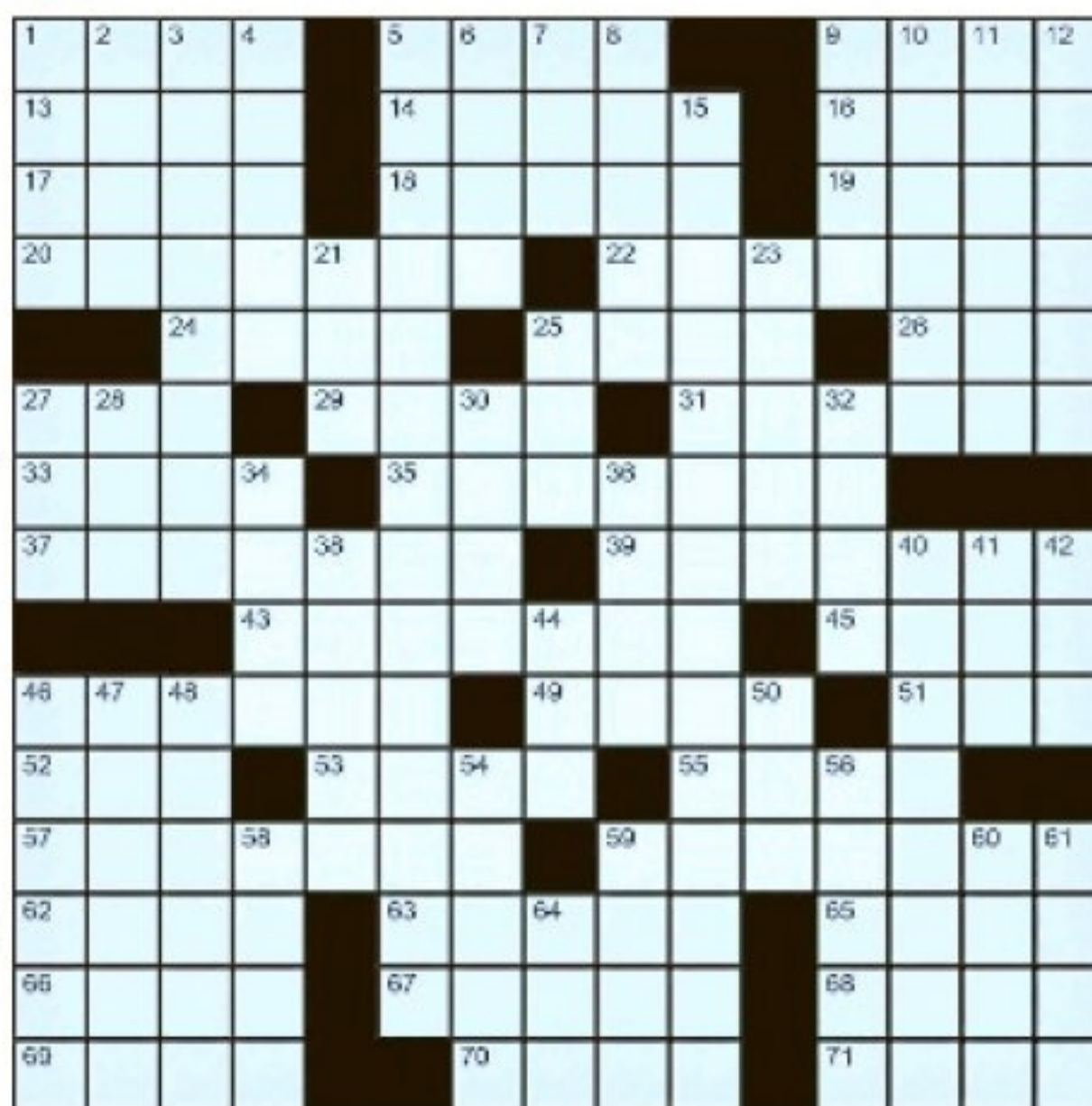
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CROSSWORD Canada Across and Down

BY KELLY ANN BUCHANAN

ACROSS

1. Cleanser brand, _ and Span
5. Lip _
9. Prescriptions, commonly
13. Faux pas
14. Tragically Hip's " _ by a Century"
16. Handling the matter: 2 wds.
17. Boot
18. Herman's Hermits singer Peter
19. Jason's craft
20. Marxist revolutionary (b.1879 - d.1940) exiled by Stalin
22. Audience's highest showing of appreciation
24. Shark variety
25. Crossword component
26. Prompt in acting
27. Criticize
29. Questionable
31. _! Camera! Action!
33. Nero's 8
35. Reacts to the sniffing salts: 2 wds.
37. Loud noisiness, States-style
39. Most extensive
43. Is in need of repair
45. Ins and _
46. Relay knowledge
49. Jealousy
51. Wee woofer
52. 19th Greek alphabet letter
53. Twisted
55. Vow
57. "Vikings" airer, The _ Channel



59. Groups of fish
62. Moreover
63. Ms. Hall of ABC daytime show "The Chew"
65. _ Mountains (Range in Russia)
66. Spelled-out grades
67. "The Un-

- touchables" role, _ Ness
68. Early helicopter
69. Increases
70. Superior at a French monastery
71. Door fastener

DOWN

1. Prude
2. Really rain
3. Getting a good night's sleep inability
4. Terra's pot tailer
5. CIBC = Canadian Imperial _ _ _
6. Holler at the harbour!
7. Roaring sign
8. Lord's house
9. Castle defence
10. Fortify the food
11. Do this after a big Winter storm: 2 wds.
12. Rocks
15. 1997 Keanu Reeves

- thriller co-starring Al Pacino: 2 wds.
21. Schuss
23. Mine entrances
25. Exerciser's club
27. Piping stuff, commonly
28. Feel awful
30. _ _ song (Cheaply)
32. Attend: 2 wds.
34. _-European (Language family)
36. Flush
38. Screen legend Greta
40. Super joyfulness
41. After-R trio
42. Sugar amt.
44. Comprehend
46. Home of Odysseus
47. Used a hammer
48. Was a mother hen
50. Cry of impatience!
54. Spiral-horned antelope
56. Sturdy
58. Chuck
59. Neatnik opposite
60. Metallica drummer Mr. Ulrich
61. Swill
64. Chest bone

IT'S ALL IN THE STARS Your daily horoscope by Francis Drake

Aries March 21 - April 20
Your daily routine will change today. Expect to meet new faces and see new places. Avoid arguments with others, which might occur because of today's Full Moon.

Taurus April 21 - May 21
Disputes about money and possessions are likely because of the full moon. Keep an eye on your possessions and finances. Be careful not to lose something.

Gemini May 22 - June 21
Today, the only full moon in your sign all year is happening. This can create stress with partners and close friends. It's a jumpy, unpredictable day!

Cancer June 22 - July 23
You feel restless today because of the full moon. (The moon is your ruler.) Stay calm and carry on.

Leo July 24 - Aug. 23
Conflict with friends might occur today because of the full moon's energy. But they also might occur because someone throws you a curveball or does something you don't expect.

Virgo Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This is a tough full moon for you. You feel pulled between the demands of home and family versus the demands of your job and your career. (You can't ignore home and family.)

Libra Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
Be careful, because this is an accident-prone day. Obviously, an accident doesn't need to happen, but it does mean you have to be more aware and mindful. Keep your eyes open.

Scorpio Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Financial disputes and money problems might occur because of the full moon today. This might include arguments about cash or something that you own. Be patient.

Sagittarius Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Today, the only full moon all year that is opposite your sign is taking place. This might introduce tension and conflict with partners and close friends. Have patience.

Capricorn Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Be patient with co-workers today, because everyone can feel the Full Moon's energy. This tends to make people feel excitable and inclined to overreact.

Aquarius Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Be patient with kids today, and likewise, be patient with your friends or members of groups. People are inclined to be touchy today and even tomorrow because of the full moon.

Pisces Feb. 20 - March 20
This is a poor day to try to keep everyone happy, especially bosses, parents, VIPs, your family and your job. It's all too much! Just do what you can.

CONCEPTIS SUDOKU by Dave Green

Every row, column and box contains 1-9



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